

PANETONE BAJ®

since 1768

A HISTORICAL BRAND
THAT PUT MILAN ON THE MAP



Baj & C. srl



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“Baj” is a registered trade mark

**The “Panettone Baj” logo is taken
from a 1899 panettone packaging**



A DESSERT WITH A LONG HISTORY. Panettone is the most classical of all seasonal desserts and behind the launch of Italian pastry worldwide. The first records of a cake similar to panettone date back to the 13th century, when a yellow cake filled with raisins made its first appearance in the Milanese countryside.

Legend has it that the name derives from a certain Toni, a young cook working in the kitchen of Ludovico Sforza (1452-1508), who during an important banquet was forced to improvise a new dessert, having ruined his original cake. Using the ingredients at hand, Toni created a new cake which became a huge success under the name *Pan del Toni*, later contracted to “panettone”. But this is just one of the many, more or less imaginative assumptions of the origin of the name.

Towards the end of the nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth century, some renowned pastry shops, particularly *Marchesi*, *Le Tre Marie*, *Cova*, *Biffi*, *Biffi “Scala”*, *Peck*, *Vergani*, *Sant’Ambreus*, *Taveggia* and the *Confetteria Giuseppe Baj* of the Piazza del Duomo, on the corner of Via Santa Radegonda, produced panettones following an in those days canonical recipe. The most entrepreneurial pastry chefs – and Giuseppe Baj was one of the first – encouraged by their success, started to “propagandize” the product and distribute it first by post only in Italy, later in Europe

On the left: a poster illustrating prizes and medals awarded to Giuseppe Baj and his export activities. Below: promotional cards issued by the “Premiata Confetteria”.



Cardboard box used for sending a 2 kg panettone by mail. Giuseppe Baj produced panettones in sizes from 250g up to 20kg.



through local distributors and eventually also overseas. Worth noting are the wide range of refined graphics of the product boxes and advertisements, initially in the rich style of *Art Nouveau* and later on in an *Art Deco* pattern. Giuseppe Baj, who had offices in Genova and Switzerland, regularly dispatched his panettones all over Europe, in Russia, the United States and even in Australia.

World War I put a temporary stop to the good fortune of panettones, by swiping away any international business on the one hand and favouring cheaper productions, meant for large distribution, on the other. This is the reason why higher quality productions were shrinking and became confined to a niche of more demanding and wealthier panettone lovers. In the meantime, brands like *Motta* and *Alemagna*, who were offering their reinvented “tall” versions at a lower price, were able to establish their hold on the market through products meant for mass consumption. It must be said though, that both Angelo Motta and Gino Alemagna were capable of building up their brands from scratch and make them known all over the world. They started by working as simple labourers in the most famous pastry shops of their times, showing excellent entrepreneurship as so many Milanese before them.

A CHALLENGING PRODUCTION. Making panettone is a complex. It needs top quality ingredients and mastery, a combination that can only be appreciated in excellent handmade productions or in industrial manufacturing of the highest level. Its main ingredients are flour, yeast, eggs, sugar, butter, sultanas, candied fruit and vanilla and it does not contain any preservatives. The most expensive ingredients such as butter are of excellent quality and added in abundance.

Needless to say that not all ingredients are the same. Giuseppe Baj, like all top-end manufacturers, purchased sultanas and candied fruit exclusively from the best Mediterranean markets. In addition, vanilla had to come rigorously from Madagascar or Tahiti, and selected or specially produced flour, butter and eggs had to meet the highest standards of quality and freshness. The mother dough was carefully nurtured and cherished and passed down the generations.

This is not a description of the production process, which – as can be imagined – includes workmanship and trade secrets correlated to an outstanding professional experience.

Panettones distinguish themselves by the quality of their ingredients, the accuracy and duration of their production process but also by their shape. Classical panettones, like the *Panettone Baj* or the ones from the historical pastry shops, are dome-shaped, while



Cover of a catalogue of items produced by Giuseppe Baj



Above: promotional calendar.
On the right: card notifying
the all-year-round availability
of the panettone.

Opposite page: Cover of a pocket
guide to Milan, with a catalogue
of products of the Confetteria Baj.

the cylinder shape became famous at a much later time, particularly through the *Motta* and *Alemagna* panettones. More recent versions come in a variety of toppings and ingredients or lack of, such as panettones without sultanas

or candied fruit. For many a panettone “philologist” though, these “mitigations” represent a degeneration of the excellent original product, considered perfect as it is and in no need of any modifications or additions.





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I love panettone

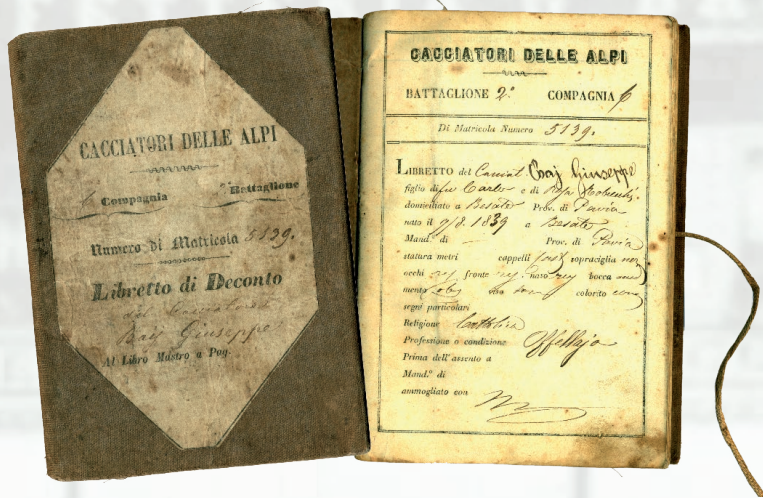
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G IUSEPPE BAJ. Who exactly was the pastry chef Giuseppe Baj? Born in 1839, he started working at a very young age in the family pastry shop, where panettones had been produced since time immemorial (documents preserved in the family, establish that the business started in the year 1768). In his twenties, he participated as a volunteer soldier in *Garibaldi's Army* during the 1859 and 1860 Unification of Italy campaigns.

In 1872, Giuseppe decided to open his Confetteria Baj in Milan, in the Piazza del Duomo, soon to become an intensive place of business. He produced and sold panettones, chocolate and other confectionery, manufactured in a big factory operating on "hydraulic power and steam".

In 1887, Giuseppe Baj was awarded best panettone producer of Milan. The Milanese said his pastry shop was protected by the Madonnina, looking out for him from her spire on the Duomo. But the fact is, as it has been



universally acknowledged, that Baj was one of the first to elevate the panettone from being a product of small-scale manufacturing, meant for local consumption to a well-known dessert, produced in large quantities and publicized and sold all over the world. Without losing

Giuseppe Baj's mementos from his participation in the Unification of Italy campaigns. The booklet states "Profession: Pastry Chef".



CONFETTERIA G. BAJ

FABBRICA PANETTONI

MARTINI ROSSI

PASTICCERIA G. BAJ - BOTTIGLIE

PIZZA ROMANA

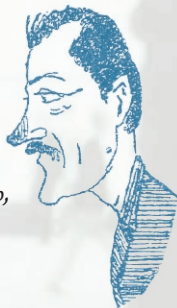
CELEBRAZIONE

the slightest aspect of its extremely high quality. In this way, Giuseppe Baj and the other renowned panettone producers of the time, laid the foundations for the development of their production during the second half of the 19th century. There is an old slogan resounding among the Milanese population between 1800 and 1900 which testifies the time of existence and fame of Giuseppe Baj's business: "*Quando a Milano non vi era ancora il tramvaj già si gustava il 'Panettone Baj'*" ("Before the arrival of the tramway in Milan, one could already enjoy the *Panettone Baj*"). Giuseppe Baj was "fortunate" not to witness the atrocities of the Great War and its subsequent interruption of international trade. The autarkic economic policies that followed confined panettones mainly to the Italian market. During the 1930's, a number of sons of Giuseppe, among whom Alfredo, Cesare's grandfather, continued producing the *Panettone Baj*, but far from attaining the achievements of the past. Towards the end of the decade, on the eve of World War II, production had ended for good. Since the end of World War II, the Milanese dessert has delighted many a household, but it was not until 2016 that one was finally able to have a taste of the famous *Panettone Baj*...

Russian stamps attesting Giuseppe Baj's visit to the country in 1889, when he closed a deal with the Zsar's court for a delivery of panettones.



Below: Caricature drawing of Giuseppe Baj by one of his artist customers.



Opposite page: The Confetteria Baj in Piazza del Duomo, on the corner of Via Santa Radegonda.



THE CONFETTERIA BAJ. Many are the anecdotes and life stories closely connected to Giuseppe Baj's business. Milan was home to a group of people with a remarkable profession, called "freguiatt" (derived from *freguia*, "crumble" in Milanese dialect). They collected the leftovers from bakeries and pastry shops and resold them. Legend has it that Baj used to donate his crumbles to the poor, thus leaving the "freguiatt" empty-handed. Artists, musicians and literates were regular customers of the Confetteria Baj and they quoted and described the shop in several



Ads of the Panettone Baj on a tram. Top of the page: Detail of 1892 stationery paper.

Opposite page: The four eldest children of Giuseppe and Teresa pose with some panettones in an 1880's promotional postcard.



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of their works. The poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, founder of the *Futurist Mouvement*, was a regular customer of the shop.

Every year he treated his friends to a *Panettone Baj* for Christmas together with an issue of his magazine *Poesia*, nowadays a rare collector's item.

In his memoirs, Marinetti describes his desire to build "a six-meter's wide and two-meter's high giant, delicious and highly digestible panettone, with the intention of dislodging the prehistoric pasta".

During the afternoons, Teresa, Giuseppe's wife, often delighted the customers of the Confetteria Baj with her piano play.

The Confetteria Baj, together with a few other buildings, among which the Caffè Cova, boast a remarkable record: electric lighting. It is in fact in 1883, right in Via Santa Radegonda, that the first European power station became operative, second in the world, only preceded by the plant in Chicago. It was built in 1883 by engineer Colombo based on a design by Edison and enabled Giuseppe to light

his shop by electric light bulbs. Interesting to know is that on December 26th 1883, only a few yards from the Confetteria



*Giuseppe Baj and his wife,
Teresa Campiglio.*

Baj, the inaugural concert at La Scala, i.e. Amilcare Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, was performed to an open-mouthed crowd. La Scala was in fact the first European theatre to be lit by electricity, exactly by 2880 incandescent lamps.

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.
One of the merits of the Futurists was to consider gastronomy on the same level as literature and visual arts. They also established that it is better to avoid mixing politics whilst experiencing nutrition. Among the weirdest (or worrying?) futurist recipes, we'd like to mention the "carneplastico", consisting of a cylinder of veal, stuffed with vegetables, on a bed of chicken meatballs and a saucage ring, entirely covered with an abundant layer of honey.





On the left: Wooden box used for sending 2kg panettones. The current brand took its logo from this box. On this page: collector cards, added to the Baj products. One belongs to the series "Storia Romana", the other to "La Poste au Cachemire".

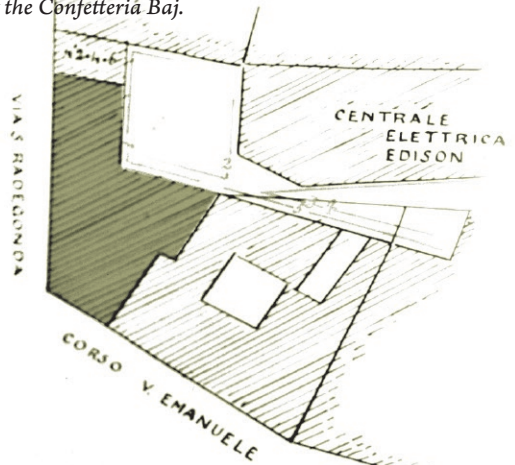


A large variety of materials used by Giuseppe Baj for his confectionery: painted or lacquered wood, metal or cardboard.

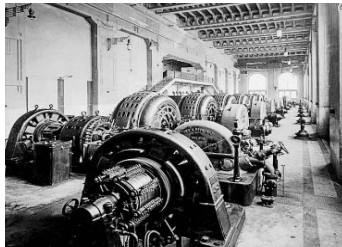
Piazza del Duomo



“The Duomo of Milan, seen from the Corsia dei Servi”, a 1901 painting by the Dutch painter Pierre Teta van Elven (Amsterdam 1831 – Milan 1908), on display in the Gallerie di Piazza Scala in Milan. Visible on the right is the Confetteria Baj, on the corner of Via Santa Radegonda, exactly in the spot where the tram is painted. A map from that time highlights the location of the Confetteria Baj.



The Confetteria Baj was adjacent to the Edison power station. Opposite: the generators. On the right: the Scala illuminated by electric light bulbs on December, 26th 1883.





Cesare Baj



Tomaso Baj

THE PANETTONE BAJ IN THE 21ST CENTURY. Over a century has gone by since the *Panettone Baj* was at its peak and now, several decades of oblivion later, two direct descendants of Giuseppe Baj, are unable to resist the attraction to bring it back to life. They are Cesare Baj, publisher, scientific toys designer and aviator and Tomaso Baj, his son, communication designer. Browsing through the many mementos of the business of their ancestor, such as the beautiful brochures dating back to nearly a century and a half ago, the robust boxes used for sending panettones by post or the idyllic promotional pictures of Giuseppe and Teresa's little rascals posing in the midst of a pile of panettones, conducted the two great-cousins by means of some "chromosomal power" towards a line of business in which they had never been directly involved. This is how they got the idea to restart production of a "21st century"-version of the *Panettone Baj*, by maintaining the value of a 250-year-old recipe and adding more modern production techniques. Involved in the production process are some of the highest authorities on pastry production, people with tons of experience and real experts in managing the choice of ingredients, following a strict quality control policy and of course ensuring the continuity of the original recipe.

The Bajs themselves bring their long experience in several lines of business, especially in communication and media. Here are their fundamental choices: “There is no doubt about its shape. The *Panettone Baj* must be “basso” (dome-shaped). The ingredients must be of the highest quality, exactly like the natural components of the past”. In short, if Giuseppe Baj were to be participating in a “through the ages” blind test, he should single out the 21st century *Panettone Baj* as being an excellent 19th century panettone. In other words, it should possess the same values of the panettone that won many a prize and medal in the 1887 Milan International Exposition and in occasion of several other universal expositions. A 250-year-old recipe forms the base for the excellence of the *Panettone Baj*, a perfect marriage between outstanding mother



Giuseppe Baj's pavilion at the Milan International Exposition in 1887.

The secret ...

La qualité du *Panettone Baj* se cache dans une recette ancienne de deux siècles et demi, dans la levure mère qui donne le souffle à chaque panettone, dans la haute qualité des ingrédients, dans l'art de sa fabrication.

Sa levure mère a presque 100 ans : elle a été soigneusement surveillée par des générations de maîtres pâtisseries qui la renouvèlent constamment avec amour. Le *Panettone Baj* passe par un processus de fabrication lente et un repos adéquat : seulement depuis quelques jours il est enfourné et soumis à une lente cuisson. Le résultat est un panettone moelleux et naturel, qui restitue intacts les divers parfums et les saveurs de ses ingrédients très raffinés, sans conservateurs ni additifs chimiques.

Giuseppe Baj in the 1870's.



dough as a base for each single panettone and exceptional craftsmanship. The mother dough is over 100 years old and has been meticulously kept for generations of pastry chefs.

It is constantly improved and nurtured with the best care.

The *Panettone Baj* undergoes a slow kneading process and given the right amount of rest. Only after a number of days is it ready to be baked in the oven at a low temperature.

The result is a natural and fluffy panettone, which maintains the perfume and taste of its exceptional ingredients for a long time, without the addition of any preservatives or chemical additives.

“Without doubt – Cesare and Tomaso continue – a panettone with these features belongs definitely and deliberately to the category of high-end brands. In any case, panettoni are not basic consumer goods and customers purchase them only a few times

per year. It would therefore be a shame to deny oneself and others the pleasure of eating such an exceptional product.”

Finally, we ask the Baj family what has been their deepest motivation for transforming a few old souvenirs relating to an ancient family business, into a modern brand. “Unquestionably, it’s the joy in honoring an ancestor we’ve never met, but to whom we feel closely connected, and whose immense entrepreneurship we greatly admire.”

“Then there is also a sense of nostalgia for a wonderful period of our history, the last decades of the nineteenth century, characterized by incredible scientific and technological progress, a strong cosmopolitan frame of mind and by the explosion of the first avant-garde movement. It is fascinating to notice the subtle link that exists between the panettone and the “aeropoeta” Marinetti and his Futurism movement, a revolutionary artistic movement, to which I, being an aviator feel a connection – Cesare Baj says. After all, in the early twentieth century, the sky was full of flying machines.”

“Lastly, there is the pleasure to belong, even as a small company, to the not established, but existing, Club of high-end panettone producers. Thanks to their outstanding products, these entrepreneurs, with or without our great-grandfather Giuseppe, managed to give Milan and the entire Italian industry, a long-lasting international platform. Therefore, they deserve universal admiration and gratitude.

Why not end with a motto? “Thinking about our ancestor Giuseppe and hoping to honour his memory we can proudly say: *Milan l’è on gran Milan*”.



Giuseppe Baj's six children and his wife, Teresa. Standing on the left is Alfredo, Cesare's grandfather.

PREMIATA CONFETTERIA



GIUSEPPE BAJ
Milano